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Knowledge & Propagation » Inviting others to Islam » Calling non-Muslims to Islam

The Status of the Family in Islam

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What does Islam teach about the family and the roles of men , women and Children?

Praise be to Allaah.

Before we find out about the role of Islam in organizing and protecting the family, we should first find out what the situation of the family was before Islam, and what it is in the West in modern times.

Before Islam, the family was based on mistreatment and oppression. All affairs were controlled only by men or in other words, the males, and women and girls were oppressed and humiliated. An example of that is that if a man died and left behind a wife, his son by another wife had the right to marry her and control her life, or to prevent her from getting married. Men were the only ones who could inherit; women and children had no share. They viewed women, whether they were mothers, daughters or sisters, as a source of shame, because they could be taken as prisoners, thus bringing shame upon the family. Hence a man would bury his infant daughter alive, as is referred to in the Qur'aan, where Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

"And when the news of (the birth of) a female (child) is brought to any of them, his face becomes dark, and he is filled with inward grief!

He hides himself from the people because of the evil of that whereof he has been informed. Shall he keep her with dishonour or bury her in the earth? Certainly, evil is their decision"

[al-Nahl 16:58]

The family in the broader sense, i.e., the tribe, was based on supporting one another in all things, even in wrongdoing.

When Islam came, it did away with all that and established justice, giving each person his or her rights, even nursing infants, and even the miscarried foetus who was to be respected and prayed for (i.e., given a proper funeral).

When you examine the family in the West today you will find that families are disintegrating and the parents cannot control their children, whether intellectually or morally. The son has the right to go wherever he wants and do whatever he wants; the daughter has the right to sit with whoever she wants and sleep with whoever she wants, all in the name of freedom and rights. And what is the result? Broken families, children born outside marriage, (elderly) mothers and fathers who are not looked after. As some wise men have said, if you want to know the true nature of these people, go to the prisons and the hospitals and seniors' homes, for children do not remember their parents except on holidays and special occasions.

The point is that many non-Muslims the institution of family is destroyed. When Islam came it paid a great deal of attention to the establishment of strong families and protecting them from things that could harm them, and preserving family ties whilst giving each member of the family an important role in life.

Islam honoured women, whether as mothers, daughters or sisters. It honoured women as mothers. It was narrated that Abu Hurayrah (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: A man came to the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) and said, "O Messenger of Allaah, who among people is most deserving of my good company?" He said, "Your mother." He asked, "Then who?" He said, "Your mother." He asked, "Then who?" He said, "Your mother." He asked,

“Then who?” He said, “Then your father.”

(Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 5626; Muslim, 2548)

Islam honours women as daughters. It was narrated from Abu Sa’eed al-Khudri that the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Whoever has three daughters or three sisters, or two daughters or two sisters, and takes good care of them and fears Allaah with regard to them, will enter Paradise.”

(Narrated by Ibn Hibbaan in his Saheeh, 2/190)

And Islam honours women as wives. It was narrated that ‘Aa’ishah said: the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “The best of you are those who are best to their wives, and I am the best of you to my wives.”

(Narrated and classed as hasan by al-Tirmidhi, 3895).

Islam gave women their rights of inheritance and other rights. It gave women rights like those of men in many spheres. The Prophet (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) said: “Women are the twin halves of men.” (Narrated by Abu Dawood in his Sunan, 236, from the hadeeth of ‘Aa’ishah; classed as saheeh by al-Albaani in Saheeh Abi Dawood, 216).

Islam encourages men to treat their wives well, and gives women the freedom to choose their husbands; it gives women much of the responsibility for raising the children.

Islam gives fathers and mothers a great deal of responsibility for raising their children. It was narrated that ‘Abd-Allaah ibn ‘Umar heard the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him) say, “Each of you is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. The leader is a shepherd and is responsible for his flock. The man is the shepherd of his family and he is responsible for his flock. The woman is the shepherd of her husband’s household and is responsible for her flock. The servant is a shepherd of his master’s wealth and is responsible for his flock.” He said, I heard this from the Messenger of Allaah (peace and blessings of Allaah be upon him).

(Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 853; Muslim, 1829)

Islam paid a great deal of attention to implanting the principle of respect for fathers and mothers, taking care of them and obeying their commands until death. Allaah says (interpretation of the meaning):

“And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him. And that you be dutiful to your parents. If one of them or both of them attain old age in your life, say not to them a word of disrespect, nor shout at them but address them in terms of honour”

[al-Isra’ 17:23]

Islam protects the honour, chastity, purity and lineage of the family, so it encourages marriage and forbids free mixing of men and women.

Islam gives each family member an important role to play. So fathers and mothers take care of the children and give them an Islamic upbringing; children are to listen and obey, and respect the rights of fathers and mothers, on a basis of love and respect. Even our enemies have borne witness to the strength of family ties among the Muslims.

And Allaah knows best.

Islam Q&A